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THE MUSICAL TIMES, And Singing Class Circular.

MARCH 1st, 1862.

LIFE AND LABOURS OF VINCENT NOVELLO.

By MARY COWDEN CLARKE.

(Continued from page 195.)

It was at Paris, on their return from their tour in Germany and visit to Mozart's family, that Mr. and Mrs. Novello brought to maturity their project for placing their daughter Clara at Monsr. Choron's establishment for vocal pupils in the French Academy of Singing for Church Music. The child had given tokens of possessing a voice and musical abilities rare in their order; and though so young, hopes were given by Monsr. Fétis and other influential persons, that the little girl might possibly obtain admission there, were she to compete with the other young-lady candidates about to try for a nomination. On learning this chance, Mrs. Novello, with her usual energy of decision, set out immediately to fetch the little Clara in time for the approaching trial in Paris. So young was the childish candidate, that she had (rather against the grain of her little ladyship's dignity!) to be placed on a stool when the first public performance of the pupils took place after Clara had gained her election; yet so potent was the youthful voice, so assured was the musical execution, that her umpires at once decided in her favor. That stool was the first step of her steady ascension to the throne of vocal supremacy. The father had reason to congratulate himself on the firm basis he had given to his little girl's education in grounding her thoroughly in the elements of her art; for she acquitted herself with a self-possession and certainty that won her immediate success. Her judges were almost as much amused as pleased with the business-like, quiet, unfluttered manner of the child, in the delivery of her competitive exercise and piece. She sang these as though she had been accustomed to face an audience for years, instead of having seen but a few summers since her cradle. As an indication of the full tone and unwavering style which characterized Clara's singing even at that early age,—one of her judges chancing to hear the little girl sing in an adjoining room on the eve of the trial-day, thought it was a girl of sixteen, and could hardly believe his eyes when he beheld the blue-eyed English child in a white frock who had just been performing Arne's "Soldier tired" with that confident brilliancy and rich roundness of voice. The weight and wealth of tone, with purity and precision in Clara's high notes, were as remarkable then as they have been ever since,—silvery, bell-like, clear, and ringing.

Before that year came to a close, Vincent Novello had to pay the final tribute of respect to Mozart's sister. Not many months after he had been to Salzburg to take the subscribed sum to Madame Sonnenburg, news of her death reached England; and Mr. Novello, in commemoration, and as a homage to her illustrious brother, got up a performance of Mozart's *Requiem*, with a small orchestra and organ, in South Street Chapel. A few choice instruments,—Mori's violin, Mariotti's trombone, Anfossi's double-bass, and some other professional friends' assistance, sustained the organist in this refined execution of the great musician's masterpiece. Eye as well as ear was gratified upon that occasion (the last wherein South Street Chapel shone with its former glory; for, soon after, it was dismantled, and the Embassy's service no longer performed there) in the expression of Vincent Novello's countenance, while the reflection of the light from the tapers fell full upon it, beaming with intellectual rapture and enthusiasm for the great master he was illustrating, as well as for the art in which he himself so excelled. His admirably-shaped head, in harmonious relief against the crimson drapery surrounding the organ-loft, formed a picture that might have been a study for Titian. Here may be a fitting place to mention that Vincent's elder brother, Mr. Francis Novello, had been the principal bass-singer at the Portuguese Chapel, in South Street, during the whole period of the former's organistship there; and on the occasion in question, it was that beautiful voice, mellow yet sonorous, which gave full effect to the noble "Tuba mirum," "Recordare," and "Benedictus." The quality of Mr. Francis Novello's voice, and the earnestness of feeling which his enthusiastic admiration of music enabled him to throw into the compositions wherein he took part, will not be readily forgotten by those who remember the choir at South Street.

It was in the following year that the family removed to 67, Frith Street; and it was here that Vincent Novello's eldest son, Alfred, first commenced business. A very modest beginning, in appearance,—a couple of parlour windows and a glass-door, with a few title-pages bearing composers' names of sterling merit, and Vincent Novello's as editor; but conscientious faith in promoting the diffusion of the best music on the part of him who edited,—industry, punctuality, and zeal on the part of the young publisher,—with practical counsel, moral encouragement, and untiring sympathy on the part of her who aided husband and son in their public endeavours as in their private hopes and aims,—made that original simple parlour-shop the germ of the mart for supplying England—nay, the world—with highest-class music. It was at 67, Frith Street, and subsequently at 69, Dean Street (to which latter place he removed in 1834), that Vincent Novello had the gratification of seeing his sons and daughters around him in the exercise of

those talents which nature had given, and which himself and wife had fostered. Judicious indulgence, affectionate care, and wise cherishing brought their happy fruits; and the art-loving father had the joy of possessing, in his own offspring, individuals all more or less gifted with the musical capacity which he particularly prized. Among his daughters he had an ample supply of soprano voices, and one alto; his sons Alfred and Edward had each a bass voice, while his son-in-law, Charles, sang tenor; thus, at any time, the musician could have performed in his own family those more refined compositions which were his especial favorites. The delight he took in hearing such vocal gems as Mozart's "Ave verum," Leonardo Leo's "Kyrie eleison," Wilbye's "Flora gave me," or Linley's "Let me careless," suggested to him the writing out of four green-bound part-music books, filled with the choicest unaccompanied concerted pieces, amounting to more than two hundred; and thus, when he and his young people spent a day in the fields, took a journey, or were otherwise beyond the reach of an instrument, they could enjoy the pastime of music as a crowning pleasure. He entitled these volumes "Music for the Open Air," and they always accompanied the family in their holiday excursions. One of the first pieces is the Canon 4 in 2, which appeared in the 121st number of the *Musical Times*, and which for years was daily sung for him by Vincent Novello's family as an after-dinner Grace. The charming quartett which will be given in the April number, was written by its composer, Charles Stokes, for his friend Vincent Novello's family-choir at this happy period of their lives; and has its place in the green-bound volumes. To the just-mentioned Canon (which he entitled "A thanksgiving after enjoyment") its composer appended the following note: "The above Canon was written in commemoration of a most delightful musical evening, which the composer had passed in company with Malibran, De Beriot, Willman, Mendelssohn, and other rare musicians. As soon as he awoke the next morning, he wrote the above little composition, in acknowledgement of the great pleasure he had enjoyed.—V.N."

Those "musical evenings," were indeed memorable epochs; perhaps the most memorable was the one in question. It was soon after Malibran's marriage with De Beriot; and they both came to this party at the Novellos' house. De Beriot played in a string quartett of Haydn's, with that perfect tone and style which distinguished him. Then his wife gave in generously lavish succession Mozart's "Non più di fiori," with Willman's obligato accompaniment on the Corno di bassetto, a "Sancta Maria" of her host's composition (which she sang at sight with consummate effect and expression), a gracefully tender air, "Ah, rien n'est doux comme la voix qui dit je t'aime," and lastly a spirited mariner's song, with a sailorly burden chiming as it were with their

rope-hauling. In these two latter she accompanied herself; and when she had concluded among a rave of admiring plaudits from all present, she ran up to one of the heartiest among the applauding guests—Felix Mendelssohn—and said in her own winning playfully-imperious manner (which a touch of foreign speech and accent made only the more fascinating), "Now, Mr. Mendelssohn, I never do nothing for nothing; you must play for me, now I have sung for you." He, "nothing loath," let her lead him to the pianoforte; where he dashed into a wonderfully impulsive extempore—masterly, musician-like, full of gusto. In this marvellous improvisation he introduced the several pieces Malibran had just sung, working them with admirable skill one after the other; and finally, in combination, the four subjects blended together in elaborate counterpoint. No wonder the delight experienced by the musical soul of the master of the house took the shape which it did "next morning."

It is not, perhaps, too much to say that the musical evenings at Vincent Novello's house gave one great original incitement to the performance of high-class music in domestic circles which has now so generally obtained in England. The professor's musical socialities in London excited emulation, and produced similar assemblages in private circles of the metropolis; these spread; and, thus, the pleasant practice of performing sterling classical music among family and friendly re-unions has now become universal in town and country. Bacon pronounces a garden to be "the purest of humane pleasures:" we might call domestic music "the purest of *urbane* pleasures," were it not that, though capital in itself, its delight is not confined to the capital; but is equally felt and enjoyed in the provinces. Vincent Novello was also the prime mover of another branch of social musical performance; a performance partaking of a public and of a private character. He was one of the founders of the "Classical Harmonists' Society;" which consisted of some twenty to thirty gentlemen and lady members who met monthly to get up good vocal and instrumental music. And he likewise promoted the institution of the "Choral Harmonists' Society," which numbered a still larger body of subscribers. These London musical societies gave rise to provincial ones on the same plan, and were another source of promoting that diffusion of fine music, its taste, its culture, its practical knowledge and performance which Vincent Novello ever had so much at heart.

During this elate period of Vincent Novello's life, the Musical Festival in Westminster Abbey took place in 1834. He himself presided at the organ; and his daughter Clara was one of the soprano vocalists in the sacred oratorios performed on the occasion. Many can remember the young angelic voice so appropriately heard in "How beautiful are the feet," and other Handelian strains. The reader will be pleased to see

a sportive note of Charles Lamb's, written to Vincent Novello's son-in-law at this time; a note still carefully preserved, despite its pencilled characters and worn edges. It is directed outside, "Charles Cowden Clarke, Esq.;" but begins and ends without address or signature. "We heard the music in the Abbey at Winchmore Hill! and the notes were incomparably soften'd by the distance. Novello's chromatics were distinctly audible. Clara was faulty in B flat. Otherwise she sang like an angel. The trombone, and Beethoven's waltzes were the best. Who played the oboe?" In the same spirit (most consistent with that which pervades the whimsical, witty "Chapter on Ears") are some lines which Charles Lamb wrote in his friend Vincent Novello's album; and which he entitled

FREE THOUGHTS ON SOME EMINENT COMPOSERS.

Some cry up Haydn, some Mozart,
Just as the whim bites. For my part,
I do not care one farthing candle
For either of them, nor for Handel.
Cannot a man live free and easy
Without admiring Pergolesi?
Or through the world with comfort go
That never heard of Doctor Blow?
So help me God, I hardly have;
And yet I eat, and drink, and shave,
Like other people, if you watch it,
And know no more of stave or crotchet,
Than did the primitive Peruvians,
Or those old ante-queer-Diluvians,
That lived in the unwashed world with Tubal,
Before that dirty blacksmith, Jubal,
By strokes on anvil, or by summ'at
Found out, to his great surprise, the Gamut.
I care no more for Cimarosa
Than he did for Salvator Rosa,
Being no painter; and bad luck
Be mine, if I can bear that Gluck.
Old Tycho Brahe, and modern Herschel
Had something in 'em; but who's Purcell?
The Devil, with his foot so cloven,
For aught I care, may take Beethoven;
And, if the bargain does not suit,
I'll throw him Weber in to boot.
There's not the splitting of a splinter
To choose 'twixt him last-named, and Winter.
Of Doctor Pepusch old Queen Dido
Knows just as much, God knows, as I do.
I would not go four miles to visit
Sebastian Bach—or *Batch*—which is it?
No more I would for Bononcini.
As for Novello, and Rossini,
I shall not say a word to grieve 'em,
Because they're living. So I leave 'em.

C. LAMB.

Beneath, on the same page, Miss Lamb subjoined the following:—

The reason why my brother's so severe,
Vincentio, is—my brother has no *ear*;
And Caradori her mellifluous throat
Might stretch in vain to make him learn a note.
Of common tunes he knows not anything,
Nor "Rule Britannia" from "God save the King."
He rail at Handel! He the gamut quiz!
I'd lay my life he knows not what it is.
His spite at music is a pretty whim—
He loves not it, because it loves not him,

M. LAMB.

After a few years, the Novellos left London for Bayswater; and resided for some time, successively, in two of the pretty cottages on Craven Hill, when that place still retained its primitive simplicity, and consisted of small detached dwellings with gardens, instead of the grand houses which now rise there in lofty rows. For a large portion of this time, Vincent Novello remained in England, superintending his various musical works; while his wife accompanied their daughter Clara abroad on a lengthened professional tour in Germany and Russia, and during a period when it was resolved that she should study in Italy, with a view to the lyric stage. Be it here noted, that Mrs. Novello's absence from home, far from preventing her fulfilment of home-duties, only afforded scope for her manifesting how exaltedly a woman can accomplish apparently incompatible tasks. Even while personally devoting exclusive attention to one child, by her presence and vigilant care, Mrs. Novello no less influenced and guided those remaining under the paternal roof by constant and minutely-detailed letters, filled with accounts of what she herself beheld abroad that might tend to the instruction and entertainment of those she wrote to, or with advice, sympathy, and the liveliest interest in all they were thinking, saying and doing at home. Not only did she cheer and support her husband, by these frequent and loving epistles, (models of letter-composition!) but she continued the good work of stimulating and encouraging their children to conduct that should redound to their own and their parents' honour and happiness. So felicitously did she blend counsel with affectionate encouragement, that her opinion, her encomium, were ever the incentive to fresh exertion; and they no less strove to satisfy the mother, than to gratify the tender friend. With a vivacity of participation in everything that occupied their hopes or their wishes, she made herself almost more a comrade than a parent to her adoring children; and even while she was away from them, they felt her with them in spirit. By a paradox wrought to a truth through the might of such a nature as hers,—those who most missed her, best bore separation from her. The talent which distinguished yet another of Vincent Novello's daughters, for singing and for languages, prolonged this separation; the mother's namesake, Mary Sabilla, finding similar maternal devotion to that which Clara had found.

At the close of the year 1848, it became evident that Mrs. Novello's health required residence in a warmer climate; and she wintered in Rome, near to her daughter Clara, who was by that time married to an Italian nobleman, Count Gigliucci. In 1849, Vincent Novello joined his wife at Nice, where they took a pleasant house, for themselves and their youngest surviving daughter, Sabilla, to dwell in henceforth; as the latter's delicacy of throat, and susceptibility to cold and damp, rendered a southern

atmosphere equally needful for her. Here, visited every autumn by their other children, Vincent Novello and his wife lived for some years in quiet retirement, after the life of active exertion they had hitherto led with such prosperous effect; and it was with complacent feeling, that they found themselves settled, during the evening of existence, in that beautiful land which had given birth to the immediate progenitor of Vincent Novello.

It remains but to speak more particularly of his several productions; those musical labours which so worthily and so happily had occupied the active portion of his life.

To be continued.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

We cannot undertake to return offered contributions; the authors, therefore, will do well to retain copies.

We would request those who send us country newspapers, wishing us to read particular paragraphs, to mark the passage, by cutting a slip in the paper near it.

Colored Envelopes are sent to all Subscribers whose payment in advance is exhausted. The paper will be discontinued where the Subscriber neglects to renew. We again remind those who are disappointed in getting back numbers, that only the music pages are stereotyped, and of the rest of the paper, only sufficient are printed to supply the current sale.

Notices of concerts and other information supplied by our friends in the country, must be forwarded as early as possible after the occurrence, otherwise they cannot be inserted. Our correspondents must specifically denote the date of each concert, for without such date no notice can be taken of the performance. All communications must be authenticated by the proper name and address of the writer.

Brief Chronicle of the last Month.

ABINGDON.—On Thursday, the 16th of January, the members of the Musical Association performed Spohr's cantata, "God thou art great," before a large party of friends, at the Council Chamber. There was also a pleasant selection of secular music, forming a second part, which, with an instrumental quartet, a duet for pianoforte, and a solo for concertina with pianoforte accompaniment, formed an attractive programme.—On the 18th of February a concert was given in aid of the organ fund, by the St. Helen's Singing Class, assisted by several professional musicians from Wallingford and Oxford. The class has not long been formed. Mr. George is the conductor.

AMPTHILL.—The Ampthill Choral Union Society gave a concert of secular music in the National School-room on January 23rd, to a large audience. On the 19th of February this concert was repeated by request.

ALFORD (Lincolnshire).—A concert was given at this place, on the 11th of February, in aid of the funds of the Alford (11th Lincolnshire) Rifle Corps. The artists engaged were Miss Walker, of Leeds, Mr. Westmoreland, of York Minster, Mr. Elsworth, of Leeds, and Mr. Iles, violinist. Mr. Burton presided at the pianoforte. The band of the corps performed several pieces during the evening.

BARDSLEY.—The Bardsley Choral Society gave a concert in the Church School-room on Wednesday evening, February 12th. The first part was sacred; and the second miscellaneous, consisting of glees, songs, &c. The room was crowded on the occasion. Mr. S. Mills, organist, conducted, and presided at the pianoforte.

BARNARD CASTLE.—The Sacred Harmonic and Choral Society gave Mozart's Twelfth Mass for a morning concert, and a programme of secular music for an evening concert, on the 31st of Jan., under distinguished patronage. The principal vocalists were Miss Welford, Miss Naisbitt, Mr. Clelland, and Mr. Lambert, of St. George's, Windsor. Leader of the band, Mr. Ainsworth, of New-

castle-on-Tyne; organist, Mr. Mortimer; Solo pianist, Miss Clelland. Conductor, Mr. Roper. The chorus numbered fifty voices.

BASSINGBOURNE.—The members of the Church Choir (sixty in number), conducted by their teacher, Mr. Crole, gave a concert in the National School-room on the 11th of February. The programme contained a selection of glees and a few solos, which were creditably sung.

BOWLALLEY LANE.—A lecture in connection with the Mutual Improvement Society was given in the large room on Tuesday, the 18th ult., to a crowded audience, by Mr. W. Hunt, on Music of the Olden Times, with illustrations, which were given by the choir under the direction of Mr. C. H. Hunt. There were some good glees sung, and altogether the lecture went off very satisfactorily, Mr. C. H. Hunt accompanied on the harmonium.

BILSTON.—On Tuesday, February 4th, a vocal and instrumental concert took place in St. Leonard's Schools, when about 700 persons were present. The band of the Staffordshire Rifle Volunteers performed several overtures, operatic selections, &c.

BRIGHTON.—A performance by the Sacred Harmonic Society took place on the 18th ult., consisting of selections from the *Messiah*. The principal vocalists were Miss Strong, Messrs. Broadbridge, Dubbins, and Weller, with a good chorus, orchestra, and organ, under the direction of Mr. Gutteridge. The room was crowded and numbers were turned away. This society is rising in the estimation of the public.

BURTON LATIMER (Northamptonshire).—On Thursday, February 6th, Mr. Smith's singing-class held a musical meeting in the School-room. The programme, consisting of part-music, alternating with solos and duets, was well performed. Several pieces were sung by Messrs. Smith and Audow. Mr. Bullock presided at the pianoforte.

BURY (Lancashire).—On Tuesday evening, the 28th of January, a miscellaneous concert was given by the Choral Society in the Athenæum. The principal vocalists were Miss Armstrong, Miss Crossland, Mr. Price, and Mr. Lambert. Harp, Mr. Adolphus Lockwood; pianist, Mr. Randall Fletcher; and conductor, Mr. John M. Wike.

CAMBRIDGE (St. Paul's district).—On Friday evening, February 7th, the tenth of the monthly Penny Readings, interspersed with vocal and instrumental music, was given in the National School-room, Russell-street. The Rev. F. E. Wigram, the curate, gave "Mr. Clipstick's Clock" for the first reading. After two songs, and a vocal duet, Sir George Young, of Trinity College, read "The Emperor of China's Nightingale." Then followed some instrumental music. The third reading, "Midnight Bells," was given by H. Crosthwaite, Esq., of Trinity College, after which two songs were sung. Mr. R. H. Ingram presided at the pianoforte, and Mr. C. Penson conducted. This was the most successful meeting of the whole, and a great many persons were unable to gain admittance.

CHEDDAR (Somerset).—A concert of sacred music was given on Wednesday evening, the 19th of February, at the National School-room, by the Church Choir. The first part of the programme consisted of anthems; the second, a selection from the *Messiah*. The music was given in a creditable manner throughout. The proceeds of the concert were presented to Mr. Alsop (the blind organist), who presided at the pianoforte during the evening. Mr. D. Jefferies, choir-master, was the conductor.

CHELSEA.—On Thursday, January 30th, a concert was given by the Chelsea Vocal Association in the School-room, Markham-square, on which occasion a large audience was present. The programme was part sacred and part secular. Mr. Johnson, the organist of Chelsea Congregational Church, was conductor and pianist.

CHRISTCHURCH, HANTS.—Mr. Halsey's Choral Class gave a vocal concert on Thursday, February 13th, in aid of the funds for the relief of the sufferers by the Hartley